

Message Text

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FM USMISSION USBERLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 512

AMEMBASSY BONN

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUESSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USBERLIN 313

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, WB, GW

SUBJECT: BERLIN ELECTION CAMPAIGN: THE OUTLOOK

REF: USBERLIN 163

1. SUMMARY: WITH BERLIN ELECTIONS LESS THAN TWO WEEKS
AWAY, CAMPAIGN REMAINS SURPRISINGLY UNDRAMATIC. ISSUES
OR LACK THEREOF ARE DISCUSSED IN SEPTEL. RACE BETWEEN
SPD AND CDU APPEARS CLOSER THAN ANTICIPATED SEVERAL
MONTHS AGO. BETTING STILL IS THAT SPD WILL LOSE ABSOLUTE
MAJORITY BUT WILL REMAIN LARGEST PARTY AND WILL GOVERN
IN COALITION WITH FDP. PRINCIPAL UNCERTAINTY REMAINS
UNUSUALLY LARGE NUMBER OF UNDECIDED VOTERS
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(10 PERCENT OR MORE) AT LATE STAGE OF CAMPAIGN. ALTHOUGH

SOCIALISTS CONTINUE TO BENEFIT FROM ASSET THAT THEIR LEADER, GOVMAYOR SCHUETZ, IS WELL-KNOWN POPULAR FIGURE, THEY ARE RUNNING SCARED FOR NUMBER OF REASONS, ONE OF WHICH IS TAX REFORM WHICH RESULTED IN INCREASED WITHHOLDING TAXES FOR MANY BERLINERS. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH MARCH 2 LESS THAN FORTNIGHT AWAY, BERLIN ELECTION CAMPAIGN MOVES ON IN UNDRAMATIC FASHION. ASIDE FROM SOME MUD-SLINGING IN CDU DISTRICTS, AND SOME MAOIST-INSPIRED MELEES GENERAL ATMOSPHERE HAS BEEN CALMER THAN ANTICIPATED.

3. IN NOVEMBER 1974, WHEN CAMPAIGN BEGAN IN EARNEST, MOST OBSERVERS EXPECTED CDU TO IMPROVE ITS 1971 SHOWING OF 38.5 PERCENT WHILE SPD WOULD DROP SLIGHTLY BELOW ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF 50.4 PERCENT IT RECEIVED FOUR YEARS AGO. ALTHOUGH POLLS PROLIFERATE WITH DIFFERING RESULTS, GENERAL FEELING NOW IS THAT TWO PARTIES HAVE DRAWN CLOSER TOGETHER. SPD IS RUNNING SCARED AND CDU LEADERSHIP IS DEMONSTRATING INCREASED SELF-CONFIDENCE. FDP OFFICIALS SEEMS CONFIDENT THEY WILL RECEIVE OVER 5 PERCENT OF VOTE AND BE ABLE TO FORM COALITION WITH SPD.

4. ON SPD SIDE, PRINCIPAL FACTORS ARE CONTINUED PERSONAL POPULARITY OF GOVMAYOR SCHUETZ, LARGE NUMBER OF TRADITIONAL SPD VOTERS, AND GOOD ORGANIZATION ON PLUS SIDE WITH PROBLEMS OF DECLINING ECONOMY AND SCANDALS RESULTING FROM LONG YEARS IN OFFICE ON MINUS SIDE. SPD LEADERS ALSO FEAR LOSS OF AS MUCH AS 2 TO 3 PERCENT OF VOTE AS RESULT OF TAX REFORM, INTRODUCED BY SPD/FDP COALITION IN BONN, WHICH LED TO TOTALLY UNEXPECTED INCREASE IN WITHHOLDING TAXES AT LEAST TEMPORARITY FOR MANY BERLINERS. SOME SPD LEADERS HAVE EVEN PRIVATELY EXPRESSED DOUBTS THAT SPD WILL EMERGE AS LARGEST PARTY. MAJORITY OF SOCIALIST LEADERSHIP CONTINUES TO BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT SPD WILL EMERGE AS STRONGEST PARTY ALTHOUGH WELL SHORT OF 50 PERCENT OF TOTAL VOTE. MUCH OF SPD UNCERTAINTY STEMS FROM LARGER NUMBER OF UNDECIDED VOTERS (STILL OVER 10 PERCENT IN A RECENT POLL) THAN PREVIOUSLY ANTICIPATED.

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5. ALTHOUGH SPD HAS CLEARLY RULED OUT COALITION WITH CDU (REFTEL), CDU MAYORAL CANDIDATE LORENZ TOLD MISSION LIAISON OFFICER FEBRUARY 17 THAT COALITION WITH SPD WAS POSSIBLE. HE ONLY RULED OUT PROSPECT OF CDU/FDP COALITION. LORENZ THOUGHT CDU WOULD PICK UP 5 PERCENT MORE VOTES THAN IN 1971, PERHAPS EVEN MORE, WINDING UP WITH 44 PERCENT OR SO OF TOTAL. IF CDU EMERGED IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AS STRONGEST PARTY, CDU WOULD THEN EXERCISE TRADITIONAL RIGHT OF APPOINTING LORENZ AS PRESIDENT. HOWEVER, EVEN IN THAT EVENTUALITY, SPD WOULD PROBABLY HAVE SUFFICIENT SEATS TO COMBINE WITH FDP TO FORM NEW BERLIN GOVERNMENT.

6. FDP CHIEF LUEDER TOLD LIAISON OFFICER FEBRUARY 18 HE IS STILL CONFIDENT THIS PARTY WILL RECEIVE FROM 7-9 PERCENT OF VOTES. OBVIOUSLY ENJOYING POTENTIAL KING-MAKER ROLE, HE SAID HE WOULD TRY TO OBTAIN FOUR SENATOR POSITIONS FOR PARTY WHILE PUTTING FORWARD CAUCUS LEADER HERMANN OXFORT FOR POSITION OF MAYOR (I.E., DEPUTY GOVERNING MAYOR). LUEDER NOTED WITH GRIN HE HAD THUS FAR RECEIVED 22 APPLICATIONS FOR SENATORIAL POSITIONS FROM FDP FAITHFUL.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 USBERLIN 313

7. LARGE ELECTION RALLIES HAVE DRAWN WELL, WITH FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS ENJOYING THE HONORS AS MOST DYNAMIC POLITICIAN AROUND. HOWEVER, ALL CONTACTS AGREE THAT WHILE SUCH AFFAIRS CHEER UP PARTY FAITHFUL, THEY MAKE FEW CONVERTS (ALTHOUGH THEY OCCASIONALLY MAKE HEADLINES BACK HOME). SPD SEEMS TO BE MOST ADEPT AT USING INTER-NATIONALIST THEMES, BRING TO BERLIN THIS COMMING WEEKEND (FEB 22) TWO PRIME MINISTERS, GOLDA MEIR, AND THREE FOREIGN MINISTERS, AND PUTTING UP CAMPAIGN POSTERS SHOWING US, BRITISH AND FRENCH FLAGS AS BACKGROUND TO SECURE BERLIN THEME--IDEA NOT PICKED UP BY OTHER PARTIES. BERLIN ARTISTS ARE HAVING SOMETHING OF FIELD DAY WHAT WITH APPEARANCE OF PHONY SPD POSTERS CONTAINING, INTER ALIA, DEMANDS FOR NATIONALIZATION OF SPRINGER PRESS, OR

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OF CDU TAKEOFF ON OLD SPD POSTER SHOWING BANDIT HOVERING BEHIND SWEET YOUNG THING UNDER SLOGAN "IS BERLIN SAFE?"

8. BFD AND SEW ARE BOTH RUNNING SPIRITED CAMPAIGNS AND, WHEN COMBINED WITH MAOIST-ORIENTED KPD (WHOSE TVT APPEARANCES, UNDER EQUAL-TIME RULING, HAVE BERLINERS THOROUGHLY CONFUSED) MAY SIPHON OFF AS MUCH AS 7 PERCENT FROM TOTAL. NONE IS EXPECTED TO COME CLOSE TO 5 PERCENT ALTHOUGH BFD MAY DO SLIGHTLY BETTER THAN EXPECTED IN GARNERING SOME PROTEST VOTES (NOT A BERLIN TRADITION IN ANY CASE) AND BECAUSE BFD CHAIRMAN SCHARNOWSKI WAS HEAD OF BERLIN BRANCH OF DGB FOR MANY YEARS.

9. COMMENT: OBSERVERS ARE OF COURSE CONCENTRATING ON WHETHER BERLIN ELECTION WILL SHOW CONTINUING TREND OF YOUTH AWAY FROM SPD AND WHETHER CDU BIG CITY SUCCESSES IN LAST FALL'S HESSE AND BAVARIAN ELECTIONS WILL BE REPEATED. SINCE, AS SEPTTEL POINTS OUT, THERE IS NO REAL DIFFERENCE AMONG MAJOR PARTIES ABOUT STATUS OF BERLIN, MOST LOCAL ISSUES COVERED IN CAMPAIGN ARE GENERALLY RELEVANT TO OTHER FRG CITIES. IF THERE ARE NO MAJOR SURPRISES, AND SPD EMERGES ONCE AGAIN AS LARGEST PARTY, TREND INTERPRETERS WILL HAVE DIFFICULT TIME DECIDING WHETHER CDU/CSU URBAN TIDE HAS ABATED OR WHETHER PRESENCE OF POPULAR SPD LEADER MADE BERLIN RESULTS SUI GENERIS. GEORGE

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